



Course Code & Title	LISS221PN Elite Interviews		
Convenor(s)	Dr Patrick Neveling, School of Politics and International Relations		
Institution	QMUL	Department	LISS DTP
Academic Year	2020-21	Term	
Number of Sessions	2 (same day)	Length of Session(s)	2 hours
Day, Date		Start : End	Room Location
Friday, 29 th January 2021 Friday, 29 th January 2021		1000 - 1200 1300 - 1500	Online, via Zoom
Wednesday, 24 th February 2021 Wednesday, 24 th February 2021		1000 - 1200 1300 - 1500	
Enrolment Link:	Click here to enrol on this online course – you may be prompted to log in to SkillsForge		

Course Description:

This course aims to provide students with the necessary knowledge and expertise in the methodology and practice of elite interviewing and the use and analysis of interview data. Drawing on the extensive experience of the convenor, the two sessions will cover the following:

- Who belongs to an “elite” in a given research field?
- Elite studies as studying “up”
- Using interviews as a source of data
- The ethics of interviewing elites
- Preparing an interview: Selecting participants and approaching them
- How to prepare for an interview and maximise data gain
- What can go wrong in an interview
- Documentation: recording and/or written notes?
- Analysing interview data: cross-referencing and reliability/validity checks
- Incorporating interview data into your research and writing

Course Outline:

Planning and preparation

The course is organised in two sessions. The first session will introduce the domain of elite studies and the concept of studying up. We look at a range of studies that involve ethnographic and other qualitative



research on elites at Wall Street, in politics, and more. The second session introduces students to the use of interviews in research. It will explore the different methodological approaches surrounding interviews, the differences between structured, semi-structured and qualitative research interviews, the ethical considerations of interviewing, how to choose and design the appropriate method for research, and the strengths and weaknesses of relying on interview data. It will also provide more practically-focused advice on how to select interview participants, how to contact interviewees and arrange an interview, and the importance of preparation. Across all these issues, the particularity of interviews with members of a given elite will be central. The class will be taught using a combination of lecture material and group-based exercises.

Execution and analysis

The session studies the practice of undertaking successful elite interviews. Students will learn about the field of elite studies, how to structure and execute an interview, the potential opportunities and pitfalls, how to cope when things go wrong, and how to maximise the quality of the data retrieved. It will also address the pros and cons of recording and/or transcribing interviews as well as the crucial component of taking notes during an interview and expanding those notes after an interview. In addition, we will consider how to design interviews so that data from several interviews can be analysed systematically, how to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, how to incorporate interview material into research and publications, and how to store the data securely in line with ethical guidelines. This class will be taught using lecture material and exercises.

Suggested Reading:

- Berry, Jeffrey M. 2002. "Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (4): 679-682.
- Harvey WS (2010) Methodological Approaches for Interviewing Elites. *Geography Compass* 4(3): 193-205.
- Ho KZ (2009) *Liquidated: an ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press (introduction chapter).
- Lillie, Karen, and Pere Ayling. 2020. "Revisiting the un/ethical: the complex ethics of elite studies research." *Qualitative Research* (Online first). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120965361>.
- Schimpfössl, Elisabeth. 2018. *Rich Russians: from oligarchs to bourgeoisie*. New York: Oxford University Press (again, read part of the introduction on "the interviews" only, here, for example: <https://schimpfossil.com/books/russias-new-rich-elite-from-oligarchs-to-bourgeoisie/>).
- Shore C and Nugent S (2002) *Elite cultures: anthropological perspectives*. London; New York: Routledge (pp. 12-14 from introduction; browse the other chapters for content that fits your research area/field).

Further Reading:

- Aberbach, J. & Rockman, B. (2002) 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews' *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35(4)
- Ball, S. (1994b) 'Researching inside the State: Issues in the interpretation of Elite Interviews', in Halpin, D. & Troyna, B. (eds) *Researching education policy: ethical and methodological issues*, London: Falmer Press
- Berry, J. (2002) 'Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing' in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35(4)
- Brenner M. (1978) 'Interviewing: the social phenomenology of a research instrument' in M. Brenner, P. Marsh and Marilyn Brenner (editors), *The Social Contexts of Method*, London: Croom Helm.



- Bryman, A. (2008), *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, **Chapter 20** (on interviews, chapter number may differ across editions).
- Cochrane, A. (1998) 'Illusions of power: interviewing local elites', *Environment and Planning A*, 30(12)
- Dexter, L. A. (1970) *Elite and Specialised Interviewing*, Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press: Evanston
- Dexter, L.A. (1964), 'The goodwill of important people: more on the jeopardy of the interview', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28 (4), pp. 556-563.
- Gaztambide-Fernández, Rubén A. 2015. "Elite entanglements and the demand for a radically un/ethical position: the case of Wienie Night." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 28 (9): 1129-1147.
- Gusterson, Hugh. 1997. "Studying Up Revisited." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 20 (1): 114-119. <https://doi.org/10.1525/pol.1997.20.1.114>.
- Hertz, R. & Imber, J. (eds) (1995) *Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods*, London: Sage Publications
- Keats, D. (2000) *Interviewing: a practical guide for students and professionals*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Kyale, S. and Brinkman, S. (2008) *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, London: Sage
- Lilleker, D. (2003) 'Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield', *Politics* 23(3): pp. 207-14
- Rhodes, RAW., Hart, P. and Noordegraaf, M. (2007) *Observing government elites: up close and personal*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Richards, D. (1996) 'Elite Interviewing Approaches and Pitfalls', *Politics*, 16(3): pp. 199-204
- Silverman, D. (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data* London: Sage Chapter 4

Eligibility:

This course is for students planning to conduct interviews with elite individuals.

You must be a PhD student at either King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, or Imperial College London, using social science methodologies, and be based in a department that does not already offer this training. If you are not a LISS ESRC funded student, you must [register with us](#) first before enrolling via SkillsForge.

Pre course preparation:

None necessary

Number of students:

25